

NEWS RELEASE

Alabama Department of Public Safety

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TROOPERS WORK TO MAKE HOLIDAY TRAVEL SAFE

MONTGOMERY – State troopers will be working to ensure safety on Alabama's roadways during the Christmas and New Year's holiday periods. They hope to promote safe travel for all through active enforcement of Alabama traffic laws and safety education efforts.

All available troopers will be on duty throughout the busy holiday season, according to Col. W.M. Coppage, Alabama Department of Public Safety director. He said federal overtime grants will provide for the extra-duty patrols in selected high-traffic areas, including the Interstate 20 corridor.

Troopers and law enforcement agencies nationwide especially will target impaired drivers during the holidays. They will kick off holiday enforcement activity during National Holiday Lifesaver Weekend Dec. 19-21, a preholiday safety campaign designed to remind motorists to refrain from drinking and driving, buckle up and obey all traffic laws.

"The holidays are a time of joy and celebration," said Coppage. "I strongly encourage those whose holiday celebrations include alcohol to designate a nondrinking driver or make other plans to avoid the tragic consequences of drunken driving." He also reminded motorists that the use of safety belts and child restraints is often the best defense in the event of an alcohol-related crash.

Coppage added that increased travel and resulting traffic crashes and injuries contribute to an ongoing need for blood donations during the holidays. He asked that Alabamians consider supporting the American Red Cross during the season by donating blood and giving the "gift of life."

The Alabama Department of Public Safety estimates that 17 people will lose their lives in traffic crashes in the state during the 102-hour Christmas travel period, which begins at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 24, and ends at midnight Sunday, Dec. 28.

In 2002, 10 people died in traffic crashes on Alabama roadways during the 30-hour Christmas period, five on rural roads and five in urban areas. Alcohol was a factor in at least three of the deaths, and eight of the wreck victims were not using safety belts.

The traffic fatality prediction for New Year's is that 13 people will die in traffic crashes in Alabama during the 102-hour period from 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31, through midnight Sunday, Jan. 4, 2004.

Last year, six people died during the 30-hour New Year's travel period, three on rural roads and three in urban areas. At least one of the deaths involved alcohol, and five of the crash victims were not using safety belts.

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